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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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Providing Inspection Services for
**Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

**Magnet Young Adult Centre
Newry**

Inspected: January 2009

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1. BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

1.1 Magnet Young Adult Centre (Magnet) was established in 1990 for young people between 16-25 years of age from Newry and the surrounding areas of South Down and South Armagh. Initially Magnet secured funding from the Rank Foundation for the employment of a full-time youth worker for a five-year period. From 1995 the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) has provided funding for a full-time youth worker and 75% of the running costs. The treasurer and administrator report that Magnet successfully raises approximately £10,000 each year in addition to the SELB grant.

1.2 There is a unique management structure in that all of the ten members of the management committee are under 25 years of age. They are elected at an annual general meeting according to procedures laid down in the constitution of Magnet. The committee has full management responsibility for the staff and the operation of Magnet. Staff from the SELB also provide advice, training and support to the management group and youth workers.

1.3 The full-time worker-in-charge has been in post for just over three months and returned to Magnet on the completion of a three-year secondment to another organisation. There are three part-time paid staff and ten voluntary staff.

1.4 According to approximate figures supplied by the organisation there are 200 members of Magnet, over two-thirds of whom are between 16-18 years of age. A core group of between 20-30 members attend between one and three sessions a week. Attendance is recorded in a 'signing-in' book left in the coffee bar area and members sign in and out but do so inconsistently. It is important that the system for recording attendance is consistent and accurate. Every fortnight between 50 and 100 young people attend a special live music event featuring local bands.

Table 1: Total Membership over the last three years indicating gender and age group.

	Male 16-18	Female 16-18	Male 19+	Female 19+	Total
2006/07	50	50	30	30	160
2007/08	50	50	25	30	155
2008/09	60	60	40	40	200
Current membership	60	60	40	40	200

Table 2: Attendance of core members who attend general youth work programmes and those who attend for special activity sessions only.

	1 session	1-3 sessions	3+ sessions	Special activity sessions (music gigs)
Number of young people	50	30	20	100

2. EVIDENCE BASE

2.1 The evaluation presented in this report is based on the observation of three afternoon and three evening sessions, discussions held with the Area Youth Officer (AYO), members of the management committee, almost all of the staff, including the administrator, and some parents. The inspection team examined relevant documentation, including the action plan for the centre for 2008-2009 and the 2008 annual report.

2.2 The inspection team held informal discussions with 25 young people in relation to their views on health and safety matters and the quality of the activities provided. All of the young people interviewed reported that they felt safe and secure in Magnet and they were aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being. They also reported that they enjoyed the activities and programmes on offer. A confidential questionnaire was issued to 50 parents; no returns were received.

3. PASTORAL CARE

3.1 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care within Magnet is very good. The very good pastoral care is demonstrated through the inclusive and supportive ethos; the attractive and caring environment; the mutual respect and positive relationships among the young people and between the young people and staff; the specialist advice and support available for young people; and the high standards of behaviour.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

4.1 Magnet has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding the young people. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department but the following areas need to be addressed: there is a need to make all of the parents aware of the arrangements for safeguarding young people; there are insufficient arrangements for the monitoring of material published on Magnet's website; and the present system of door control does not provide adequate safety for the young people attending the centre.

4.2 The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has reported to the worker-in-charge and a representative of the management committee the main issues emerging from the observations and discussions. The District Inspector will make a monitoring visit within six working weeks to ensure that important issues identified are addressed appropriately.

5. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

5.1 The distinctive ethos of Magnet is characterised by a core group of young people who exhibit a commitment and dedication to the overall management of the centre. The members of the management committee have exercised a high level of responsibility and are learning new leadership and management skills in relation to their duties. Members of the committee are currently involved in a seven-session weekly management course.

5.2 A minority of the overall membership has successfully completed accredited volunteering programmes with Youth Action and Millennium Volunteers. The worker-in-charge reported that the young people had been involved in other training courses including 15 members who completed a drug and alcohol awareness session delivered by the

Newry Drugs and Alcohol team and 20 young people who completed a session on hate crime awareness delivered by Newry and Mourne Council. In the last year four volunteer staff have successfully completed the 'Introduction to Youth Work' course through George Williams College, London.

5.3 There is a good range of learning experiences for members in programme areas such as the arts group, the positive health group and the music and media group. In addition to increasing their knowledge in the various areas the small number of young people who attend these groups are developing personal skills including participating actively in discussions and assisting in leading the group. Almost all of the young people who attend reported an increase in their self-confidence.

5.4 Magnet has established good links with other agencies to the benefit of its members and promotes the inclusion of minority groups. The 'out in the city' group which meets on a weekly basis, is a discussion group that explores issues around sexuality. This is one example of how the young people display understanding and sensitivity towards the rights and feelings of others and, in particular, young people from a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered background.

5.5 Magnet has had a long history of involvement in live music. A significant minority of the core members are involved in the music and media group; they not only organise the fortnightly live music evening but offer practical skills to other members in working with sound and lighting equipment. For example, two young people (who attend the local college of further education) use the learning from their music and media course to help train other young people to manage live music nights.

5.6 The young people who attend Magnet are from mixed community backgrounds and, in discussions held, they demonstrated how at ease the members felt through the neutral environment created.

6. QUALITY OF PROVISION

6.1 The quality of the planned youth work sessions observed ranged from satisfactory to good. The staff plan well for each session. They create a positive learning environment that underpins the core theme of personal and social development. The young people understood the purpose of the session, observed they were involved in the planning process and they contributed to discussions with maturity and openness. In at least two sessions, the young people were encouraged by the youth worker to take a co-facilitation role and they demonstrated a good understanding of the group work process. In another session the young leader introduced the topic of music through the years and led effectively a discussion on how music had influenced members of the group. The young people who attended these groups participated with enthusiasm and enjoyment while having respect for their peer leader.

6.2 The afternoon 'drop in' sessions provide the young people with the opportunity to relax after school, work or college. On two of the five afternoons during the week of the inspection, there were specific group activities including a meeting of the funding group. There are 20-30 young people who attend the other afternoon session and management and staff could develop these sessions to provide and enhance personal development opportunities. Supervised Internet access and a study area were two suggestions made by the young people and parents during the inspection.

6.3 Magnet has established positive working links with several external organisations including the Good Relations office of Newry and Mourne Council, the Education Other Than At School Initiative and the Public Initiative for the Prevention of Suicide and Self-Harm Project. Members of staff from these projects have positively endorsed the work of the centre.

6.4 Members of Magnet are actively involved in the local youth council and in the area youth forum and demonstrate further the ethos of participation in the centre by their involvement in leading community fundraising events and organising exchange trips in the wider Newry and Mourne area.

7. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

7.1 The management committee is a dedicated and committed group of young people who have come through the membership ranks and have now taken on significant leadership and management responsibilities within Magnet. Through their presentation to the inspection team, members of the committee demonstrated a sound knowledge of the purpose and role of youth work. The chairperson demonstrates strong leadership through her good organisation and communication skills. She is well supported by other members of the committee. The committee are developing management and organisation skills through their attendance at the management course.

7.2 At a strategic level Magnet has been well supported by staff and officers from the SELB who have provided training and assistance to the members of the management committee. For example, the management committee meets regularly; the AYO, the chairperson and the worker-in-charge meet on a monthly basis to monitor and support the work; and the SELB officer makes moderation visits to Magnet at least once a term to provide feedback on the action plan and related targets.

7.3 Magnet will submit a new three-year operational plan by September 2009 to keep in line with all full-time units in the SELB. There is a need to ensure that the three-year plan will demonstrate improvement over the period, build on the current one-year action plan and that the targets set are understood and agreed by the management committee to ensure the continued raising of standards and achievements.

7.4 Since his return from secondment, the worker-in-charge has made good progress in a short time by providing good leadership and direction to the young people and the management committee of Magnet. The members of the management committee and the young people have reported that the new programme on offer is a positive response to the needs of members. The part-time staff are well qualified and it is important that the staff continues to develop the educational programmes to the level of their training and experience.

7.5 The administrator plays a valuable role in the running of Magnet and works for the benefit of the young people and staff. She provides very good support to the treasurer, a young volunteer member, on the monitoring and preparation of financial statements, and in reducing Magnet's overdraft.

8. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

8.1 The strengths of the provision include:

- the commitment and dedication of the management committee of young people who accept a high level of responsibility in managing, and making decisions about, the organisation and who demonstrate good levels of communication and presentation skills;
- the inclusive ethos of Magnet that celebrates diversity and provides an environment that demonstrates mutual respect and positive relationships among young people and between young people and staff;
- the good opportunities for the young people to acquire new skills, interests, and knowledge through the small group programmes on offer, and the core group of members who demonstrate independent and collaborative working;
- the very good quality of pastoral care provided by the organisation and the specialist advice available to the young people in need of support and help;
- the equality of opportunity and access for all the young people irrespective of their needs or background; and
- the appropriately experienced and qualified staff and the positive progress made by the worker-in-charge in developing new programmes and providing good leadership to the young people.

8.2 The areas for improvement include the need:

- to increase the number of core members so that more young people in Newry and the surrounding areas can benefit from the good provision and learning opportunities on offer in the centre;
- to ensure that all the staff and management are using appropriate self-evaluation and action planning processes to review the effectiveness of the youth work interactions so that learning opportunities are recorded to measure the impact of the youth work practice; and
- to review the afternoon provision so that the available resources are used to provide a more stimulating and challenging experience.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 In most of the areas inspected the quality of youth work provided in this centre is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in the achievements and standards obtained by the young people, and in the leadership and management of the centre. These areas need to be addressed if the needs of all the young people are to be met more effectively. The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the centre's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

APPENDIX

HEALTH AND SAFETY

There is a need to ensure that the staffing levels at all youth work sessions include staff with adequate training and experience.

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